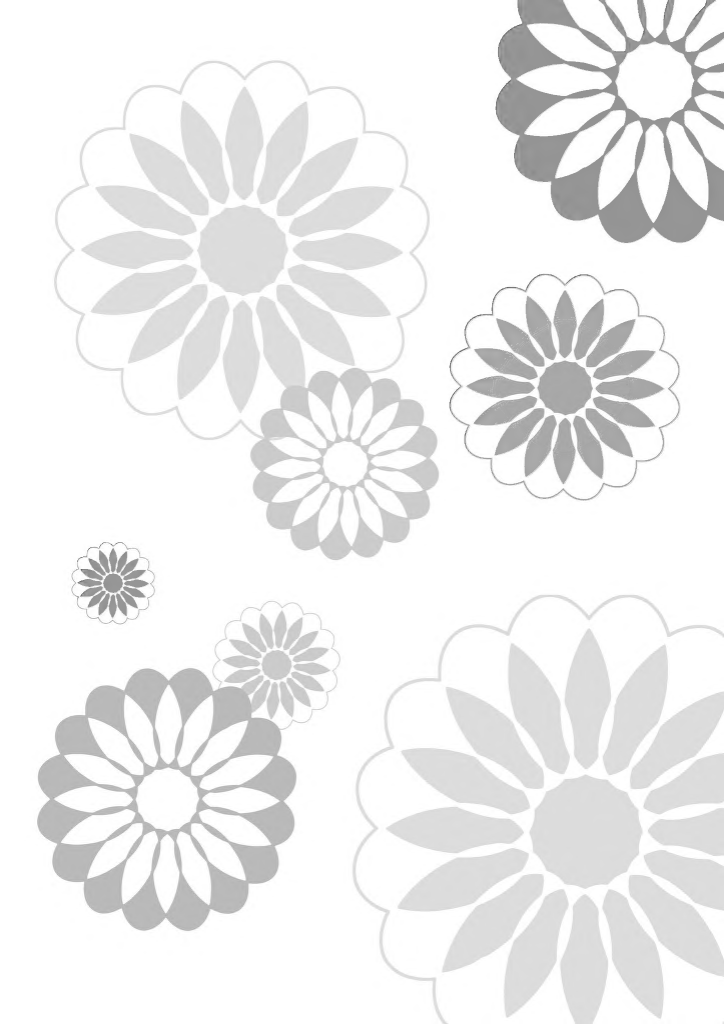
藤島康介
KOSUKE FUJISHIMA
40
ああっ女神さまっ
Oh My Goddess!



Oh My Goddess! 40

ああっ女神さまっ

STORY AND ART BY
Kosuke Fujishima

TRANSLATION BY
Dana Lewis AND Christopher Lewis

LETTERING AND TOUCHUP BY
Susie Lee AND Betty Dong
WITH Tom2K

DARK HORSE MANGA™

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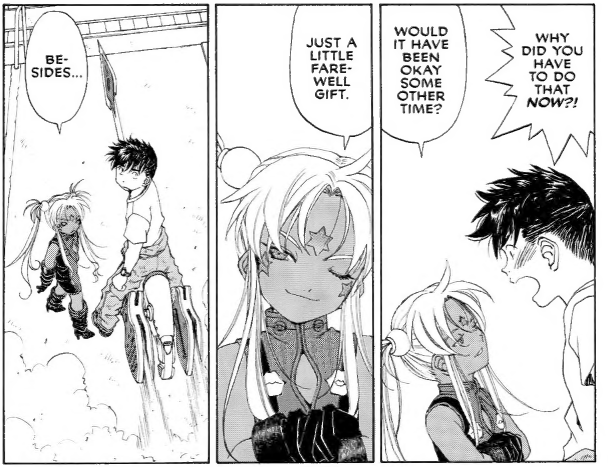
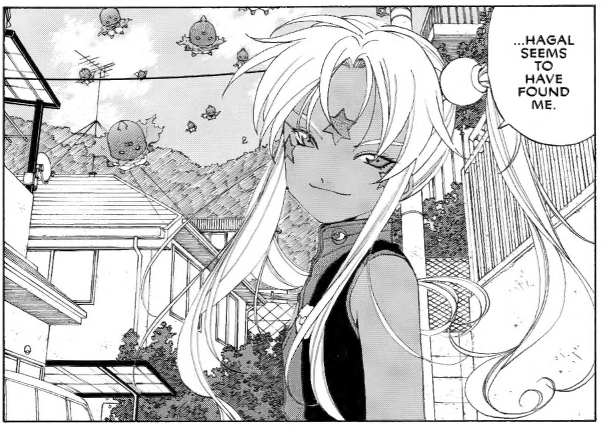
CHAPTER 250

Kiss of Demonkind

WHA...
WHA...
WHA...
WHA...?
C'MON. IT'S NOT LIKE IT WAS YOUR FIRST TIME.


BE-
SIDES...
JUST A
LITTLE
FARE-
WELL
GIFT.
WOULD
IT HAVE
BEEN
OKAY
SOME
OTHER
TIME?
WHY
DID YOU
HAVE
TO DO
THAT
NOW?!


...HAGAL
SEEMS
TO
HAVE
FOUND
ME.

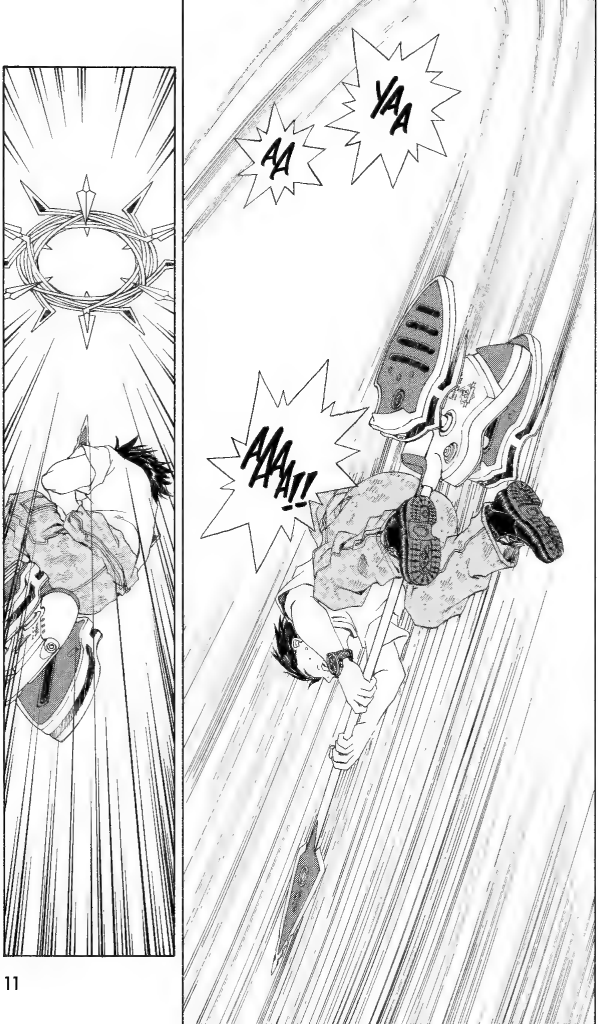
WHSSH
...EH?
YEOW! YOU'RE RIGHT--
UH-OH...
WAIT! WHAT DOES THAT HAVE TO DO WITH IT?!
VRNNNNN

UM... COULDN'T THIS BE TROUBLE ...?!
ACTUALLY, IT'S *PERFECT.*

Ja!
OKAY!! NOW!!
GO FOR IT, GLÜHENDE HERZ!
RRRRR

RRUARR
GYA AAA!
THIS IS NO TIME TO BE "VRRRNNING"!
VR RRNN
BELL-DANDY!!

WOW...
AH!
...EH?!
AWE-
SOME...
...?!

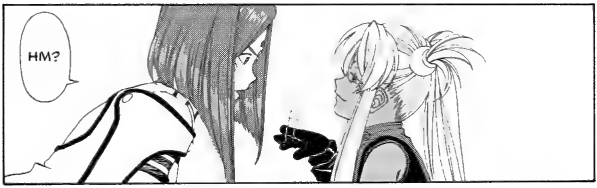

YAA
AA
AAAH!!

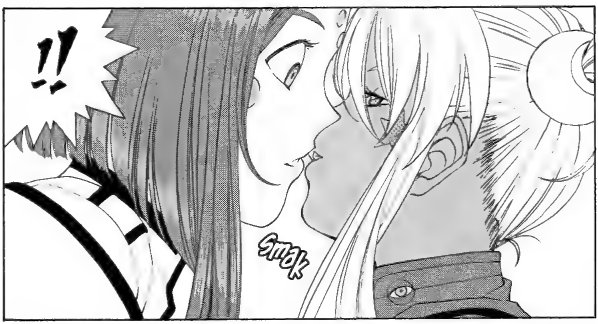
KEIICHI!!
IT'S OKAY!!
I'M WITH YOU.

WHAT ARE *YOU* FREAKING OUT ABOUT?
IT'S *MY* FIRST TIME GOING THERE TOO, YOU KNOW!!
HEY, HEY, KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE ROAD!!
YOU'LL HIT SOMETHING IF YOU DON'T FLY STRAIGHT!!
YEAH... THAT'S RIGHT.
I ALREADY MADE UP MY MIND.
WHATEVER AWAITS ME INSIDE THERE...
...I'M GOING TO MEET IT WITH MY EYES OPEN!!

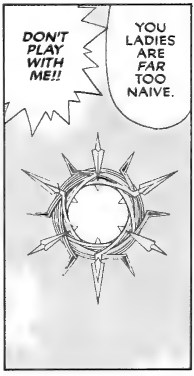
VRRH
SHHHH
YOU ARE INDEED DEMON-KIND.
OKAY, THEY'RE OUTTA HERE.

STAYING HERE WAS A DANGER-OUS MOVE.
YOUR GOAL WAS TO SEND THOSE GIRLS OFF.
...IT WOULD'VE BEEN BEST FOR YOU TO LEAVE THIS SPOT.
IF THEY'D BEEN AFTER YOU...
HM? I WONDER WHAT YOU MEAN BY THAT?
WHY CHOOSE THAT COURSE OF ACTION?
COME CLOSER. I'LL TELL YOU.
chuckle


HM?


!!
SMACK

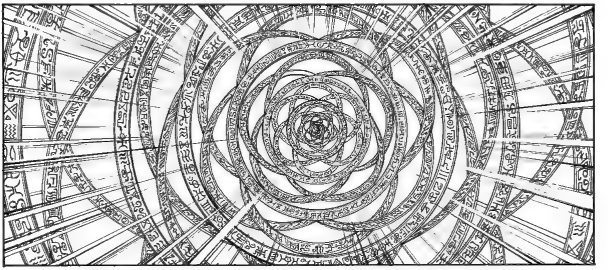
I CLOSED MY EYES.
...

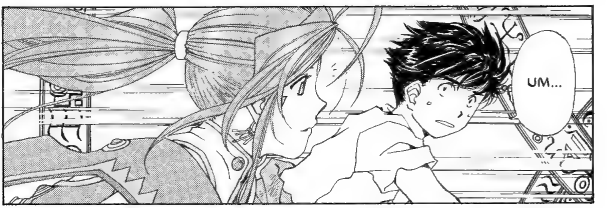

DON'T PLAY WITH ME!!
YOU LADIES ARE FAR TOO NAIVE.

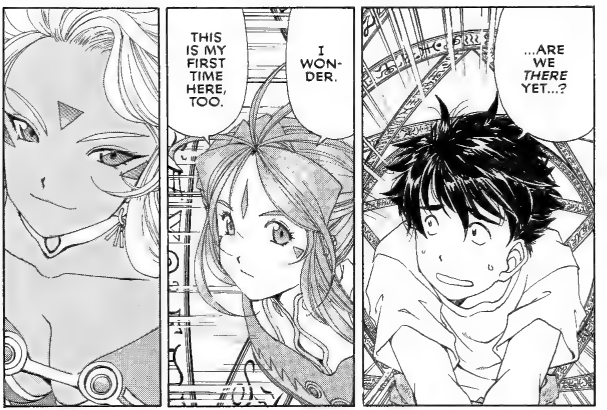
WHAT ARE YOU DOING ?!

CHAPTER 251

Upon Glühende Herz




UM...

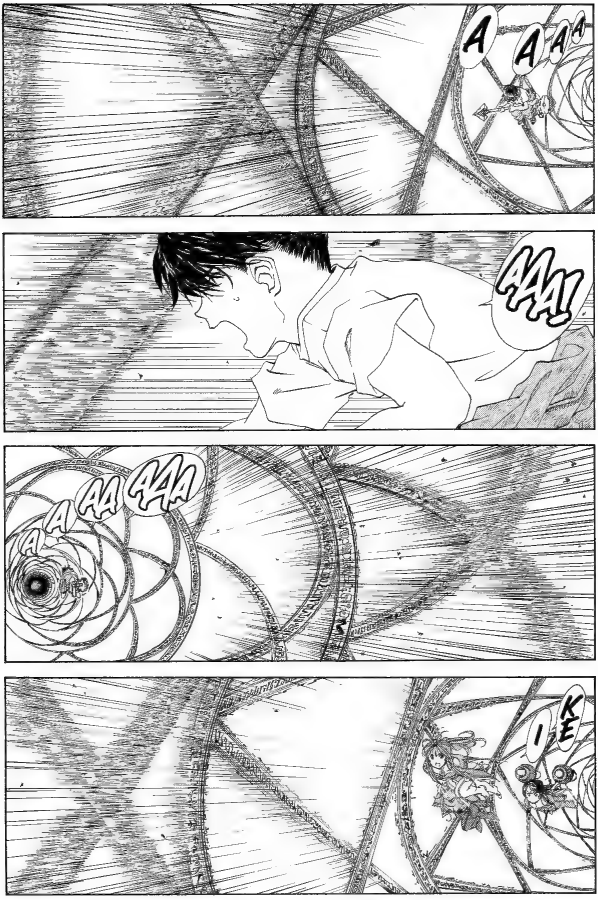

...ARE WE *THERE* YET...?
I WON-DER.
THIS IS MY FIRST TIME HERE, TOO.

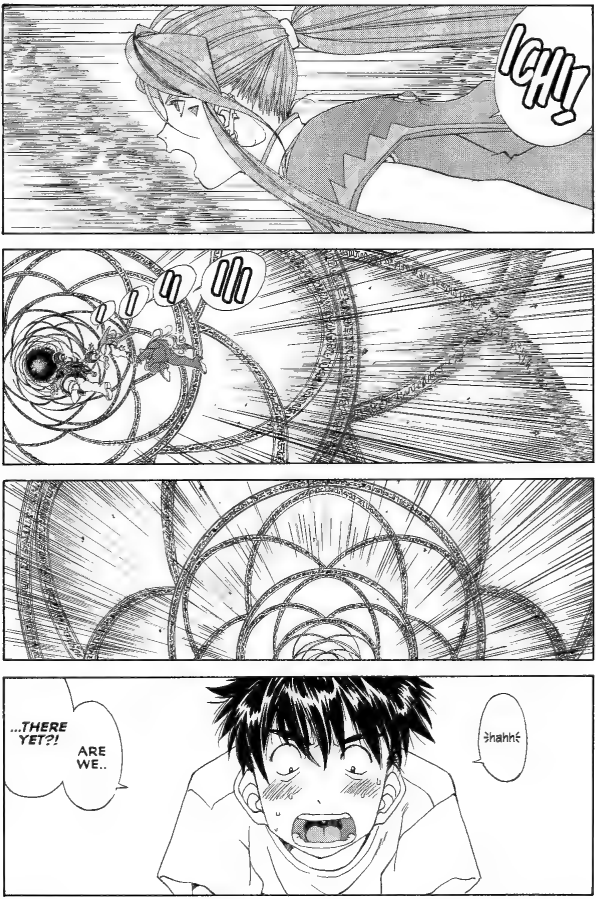
HURTS, DOESN'T IT?
NOTHING HURTS! NOTHING HURTS ANY-WHERE!!
OH?! DOES SOME-THING HURT ...?!
...
I'M DOING JUST FINE!
WHAT? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

W-WELL ...!
...IT'S PRETTY TOUGH ON THE CROTCH.
IF YOU'RE NOT USED TO THE BROOM...
WHAT'S A CROTCH?

C'MON. WHAT IS IT?
YOU'RE IN PAIN? I NEED TO HEAL IT!
WHAT? WHAT?
UM...
...NO.
PLEASE... LET ME SEE!!

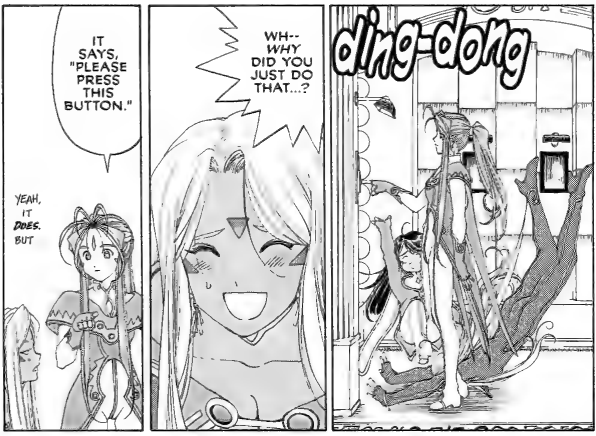
ARE WE THERE YET?!
Now speeding up.
YOOOM
YAR RGH!


A
A
A
A
AAA!
A
AA
AAA
A
AIKE

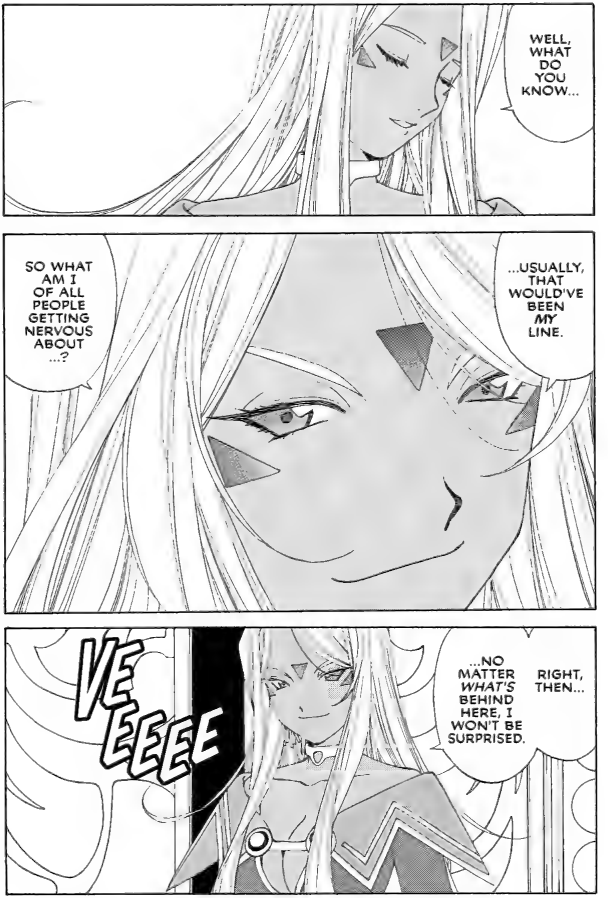

ICHI!
...THERE YET?!
ARE WE..
SHHHH!

...OH.
WELCOME TO DEMON WORLD KEIICHI MORISATO AND FRIENDS
SOMEHOW, I DOUBT THEIR SINCERITY.
THIS DOORWAY IS PROBABLY A TRAP.

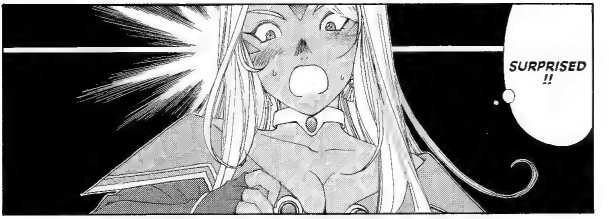
WAIT!! DON'T PRESS THAT!!
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO PRESS THIS BUTTON.
!!
PLEASE PRESS THIS BUTTON FOR SERVICE
DON'T PRESS THIS?!

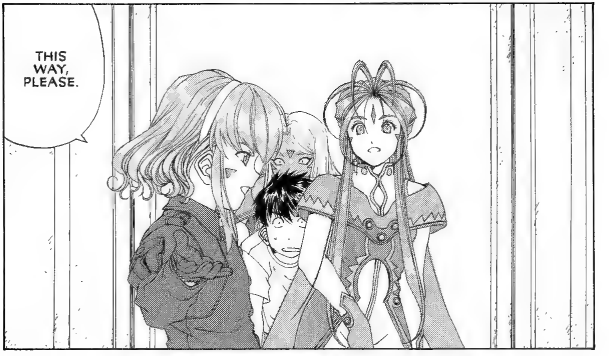

IT SAYS, "PLEASE PRESS THIS BUTTON."
YEAH, IT DOES. BUT
WH-- WHY DID YOU JUST DO THAT...?
ding-dong

...AND IF THERE ARE TRAPS ALONG THE WAY, WE MIGHT AS WELL JUST BREAK THROUGH THEM.
BESIDES, I THINK THIS JOURNEY HAS JUST BEGUN...

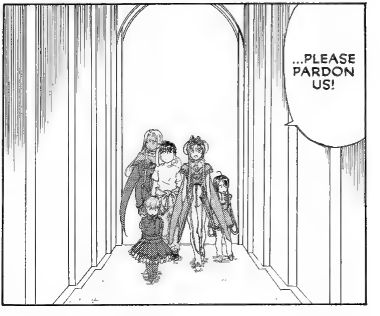

WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW...
...USUALLY, THAT WOULD'VE BEEN *MY* LINE.
SO WHAT AM I OF ALL PEOPLE GETTING NERVOUS ABOUT ...?
RIGHT, THEN...
...NO MATTER *WHAT'S* BEHIND HERE, I WON'T BE SURPRISED.
VE EEEE

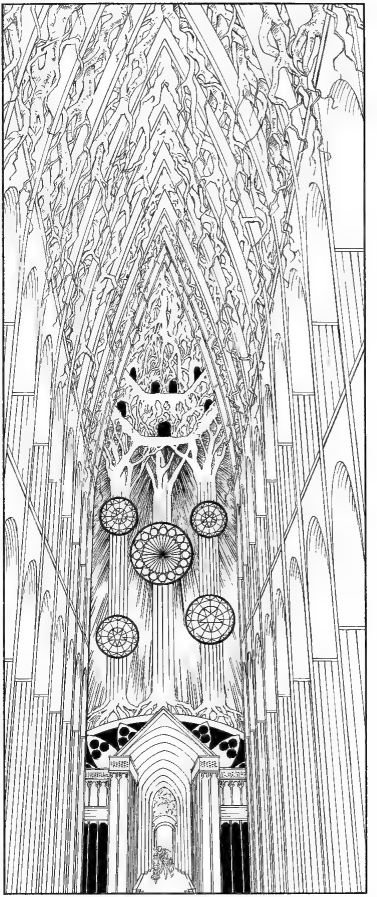
WELCOME.


SURPRISED !!


THIS WAY, PLEASE.

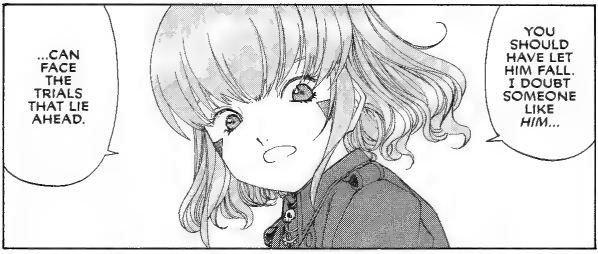
WOW!


...PLEASE PARDON US!



WHY?
I'D KEEP LOOKING UP IF I WERE YOU.

!!
KEIICHI !!
WHUMP
klank


YOU SHOULD HAVE LET HIM FALL. I DOUBT SOMEONE LIKE *HIM*...
...CAN FACE THE TRIALS THAT LIE AHEAD.

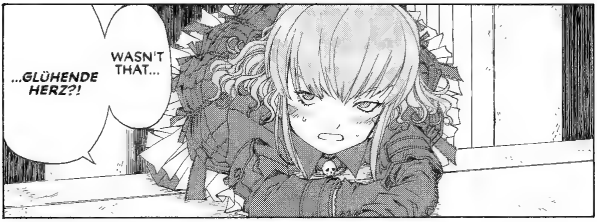
TRIALS?

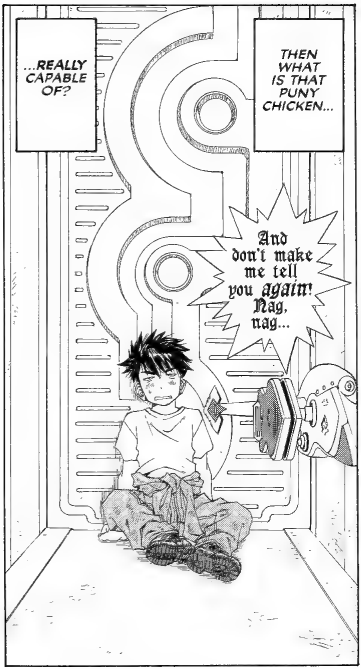
YOU WEREN'T THINKING I'D SIMPLY TROT RIGHT ALONG...
...TO INTRODUCE YOU TO MISTRESS HAGAL... *WERE* YOU...?

I DON'T HAVE TIME TO WASTE ON A CHICKEN LIKE YOU.
LET'S GET YOU ON YOUR WAY.
Looking forward to the next surprise
She was
He was
She was
...WELL, WHATEVER.
WHAT'D YOU SAY?!
I'LL SHOW YOU...

AT LEAST YOU ADMIT THE CHICKEN PART.
...THAT I'M NO ORDINARY CHICKEN!
Well, then...

!!
Poke
...Move it, chicken!!
GYAAAHH!!
I NEVER REALIZED IT BEFORE... BUT THAT BROOM IS FEMALE.
KYA!
KYA!
KYA!
Show some guts, and maybe you can become a rooster!


WASN'T THAT...
...GLÜHENDE HERZ?!


...REALLY CAPABLE OF?
THEN WHAT IS THAT PUNY CHICKEN...
And don't make me tell you again! Nag, nag...

MISTRESS HILD LENT HIM HER BROOM ...?

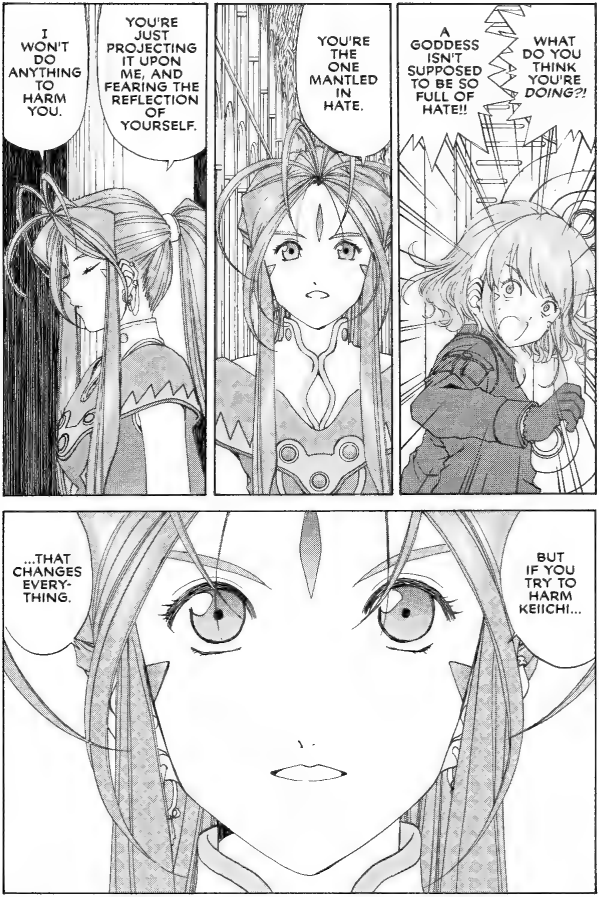
CHAPTER 252

True Darkness

AN-
OTHER
DOOR
...?
YUP.
YOU'LL
HAVE
TO OPEN
THESE
DOORS
ONE BY
ONE...
...TO
ADVANCE
FURTHER
ON.

NOW, THE *FIRST* KEY IS A FREEBIE...
...BUT THE OTHERS, YOU'LL HAVE TO *EARN.*
AND FEARSOME GUARDIANS AWAIT US BEYOND EACH DOOR...?
AND WE HAVE TO DEFEAT THEM ONE BY ONE IN ORDER TO ADVANCE ...?
DO YOU HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT LIKE THAT...?
SORRY! I JUST DIDN'T REALIZE IT'D BE SO...SO *STRAIGHT-FORWARD!*

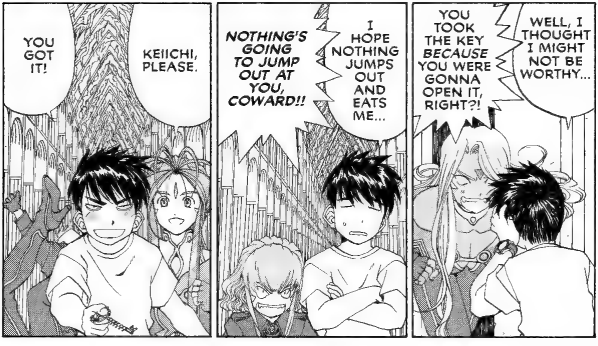
PERHAPS I SHOULD JUST KILL YOU NOW.
...
KYAA!
SSSSH


I WON'T DO ANYTHING TO HARM YOU.
YOU'RE JUST PROJECTING IT UPON ME, AND FEARING THE REFLECTION OF YOURSELF.
YOU'RE THE ONE MANTLED IN HATE.
A GODDESS ISN'T SUPPOSED TO BE SO FULL OF HATE!!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE *DOING*?!
...THAT CHANGES EVERY-THING.
BUT IF YOU TRY TO HARM KEIICHI...

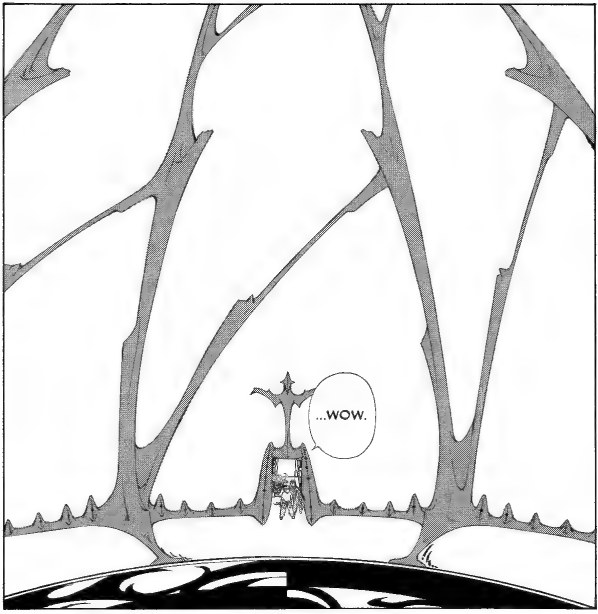
HE'S NO ORDINARY GUY...
...
SAY, ARE YOU REALLY GOING OUT WITH HER? SHE'S KIND OF SCARY.
HUH? SHE'S NOT SCARY!
OKAY, GET GOING, THEN.
I JUST HOPE YOU DON'T GET CRUSHED AT THE FIRST DOOR.

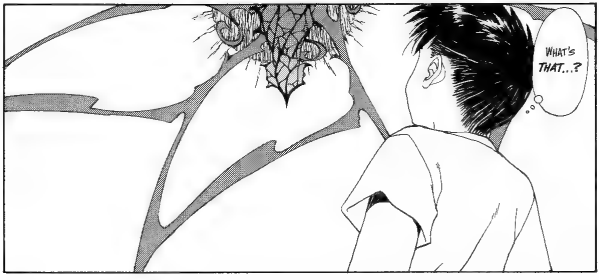
I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN IF YOU MAKE IT THROUGH...
...AND ACTUALLY, IT'LL BE TROUBLE IF YOU *DON'T*.

JUST DO IT!!
IS IT REALLY OKAY FOR ME TO OPEN THIS DOOR...?

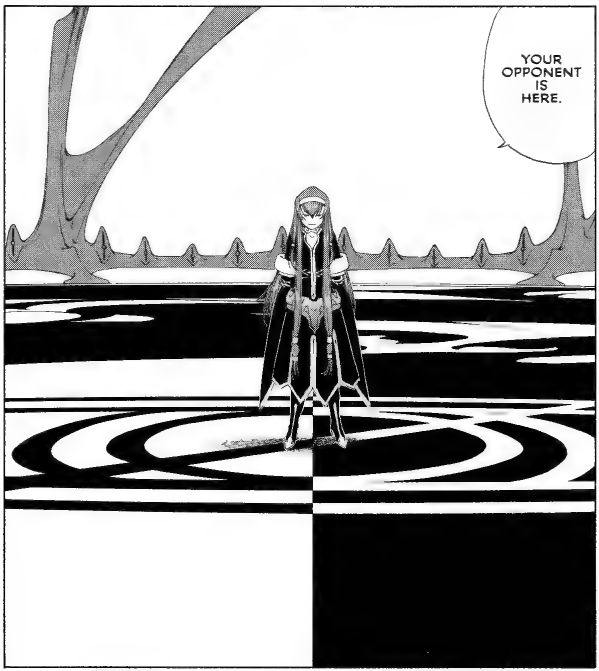

YOU GOT IT!
KEIICHI, PLEASE.
NOTHING'S GOING TO JUMP OUT AT YOU, COWARD!!
I HOPE NOTHING JUMPS OUT AND EATS ME...
YOU TOOK THE KEY BECAUSE YOU WERE GONNA OPEN IT, RIGHT?!
WELL, I THOUGHT I MIGHT NOT BE WORTHY...

KACHINKK
OH...

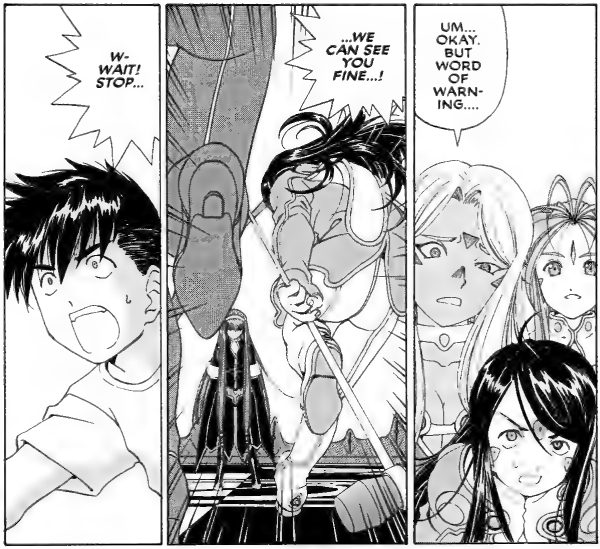

...WOW.


WHAT'S THAT...?

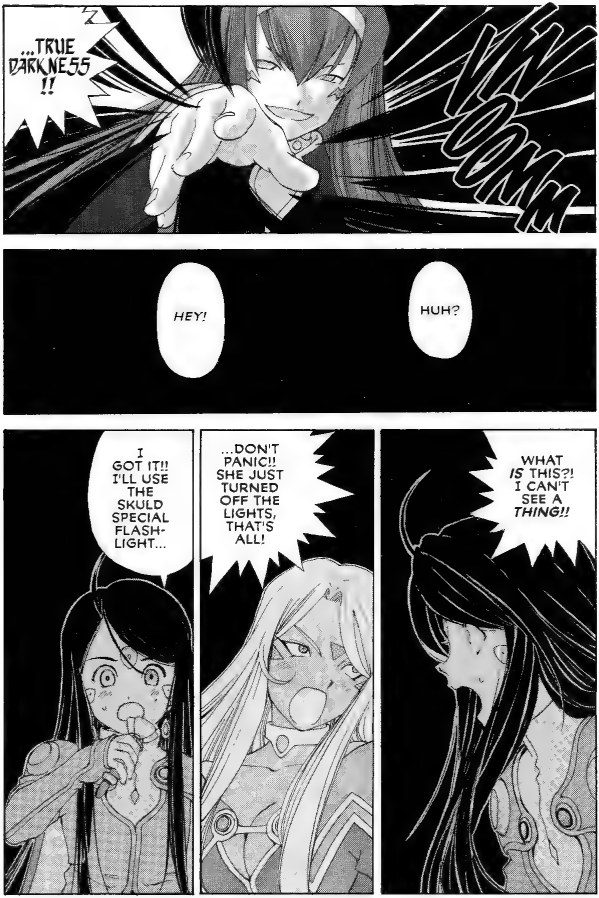
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?


YOUR OPPONENT IS HERE.

SHNK
AH!
DON'T WORRY... I'LL HONOR THE TERMS OF THE CONTEST.
DEFEAT ME, AND I SHALL GIVE YOU THE NEXT KEY.
BUT HOW *CAN* YOU DEFEAT ME... IF YOU CAN'T EVEN *SEE* ME...?


W-WAIT! STOP...
...WE CAN SEE YOU FINE...!
UM... OKAY. BUT WORD OF WARNING....

Each Ray of Light... Each Train of Light... Shall Turn to Darkness...
Come to Me, Darkness--


...TRUE DARKNESS!!
WOOMM
HEY!
HUH?
I GOT IT!! I'LL USE THE SKULD SPECIAL FLASH-LIGHT...
...DON'T PANIC!! SHE JUST TURNED OFF THE LIGHTS, THAT'S ALL!
WHAT *IS* THIS?! I CAN'T SEE A *THING*!!

IT'S NOT BROKEN, URD! IT'S JUST... THERE'S NO LIGHT COMING OUT!
DON'T TELL ME IT'S BROKEN.
...
klik
AS FOR ME...
KEIICHI... MY SPELLS AREN'T WORKING, EITHER.
Permanent Star Mine!!
sigh UP TO ME, AS USUAL.
NO I DIDN'T!! SOME-THING'S WRONG!!
SLOPPY!! YOU BLEW IT!! YOU BLEW IT!!
...

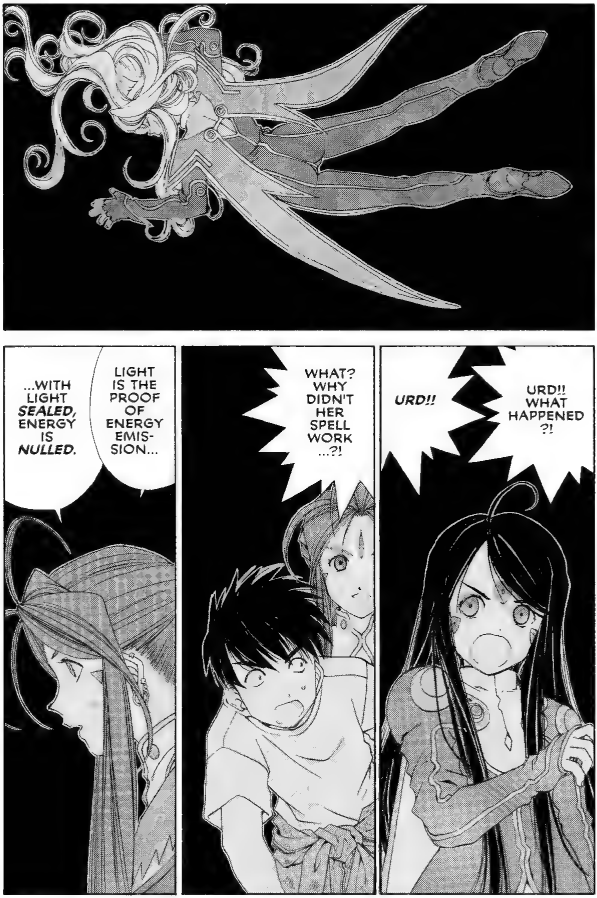
...I SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE MY WATCH.
THE COSMO-NAUTE CHRONO-MATIC USES TRITIUM LIGHTING.
...IT SHOULD GLOW IN THE DARK NO MATTER WHAT.
COME TO THINK OF IT...
...MY EYES SHOULD HAVE ADJUSTED TO THE DARKNESS BY NOW TOO.
BUT THIS IS LIKE...
...TRUE DARKNESS.

...BECAUSE I PERMIT NO LIGHT.
NO LIGHT CAN ILLUMINATE ME...
...FOR THERE IS NO SEEING HERE.
YOU FOOLS SHOULD LISTEN...
WAHH!!
RULER OF ELEMENTAL DARKNESS.
I AM ALVAR THE BLACK.

AND SOON YOU WILL *BECOME ONE* WITH MY ELEMENT.

THE REST OF YOU, TAKE COVER...!
HA! MY LIGHTNING NEED ONLY COME NEAR YOU TO TAKE YOU OUT, MISSY...!
...STRIKE, DIVINE THUNDER-BOLTS!!
Rumbling in the Heavens, Flashing between the Clouds, Ripping Heaven and Earth Asunder...
eeek!!
eeek!
UM...
eeek!

I SAID YOU FOOLS SHOULD LISTEN
HUH?
!!
THWD


URD!! WHAT HAPPENED ?!
URD!!
WHAT? WHY DIDN'T HER SPELL WORK ...?!
LIGHT IS THE PROOF OF ENERGY EMIS-SION...
...WITH LIGHT SEALED, ENERGY IS NULLED.

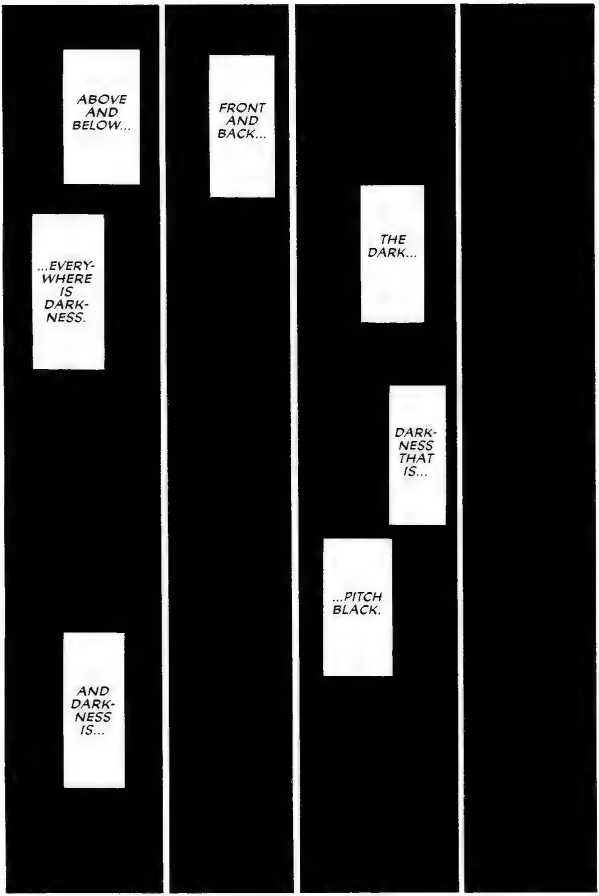
SHE CAN SEE US!!
!!
YOU KNEW THERE WAS NO POINT IN COWERING.
WELL DONE, BELL-DANDY.
ZERO MULTIPLIED IS STILL ZERO.
NO. WITH NO LIGHT, THERE'S NO POINT BOOSTING SENSITIVITY.
AND WHY SHOULD THAT BE? UNLESS SHE DOESN'T WANT THE REVERBERATIONS DISTRACTING HER...
BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE STRANGE ABOUT THIS CHAMBER... SOUND DOESN'T ECHO OFF THE WALLS.

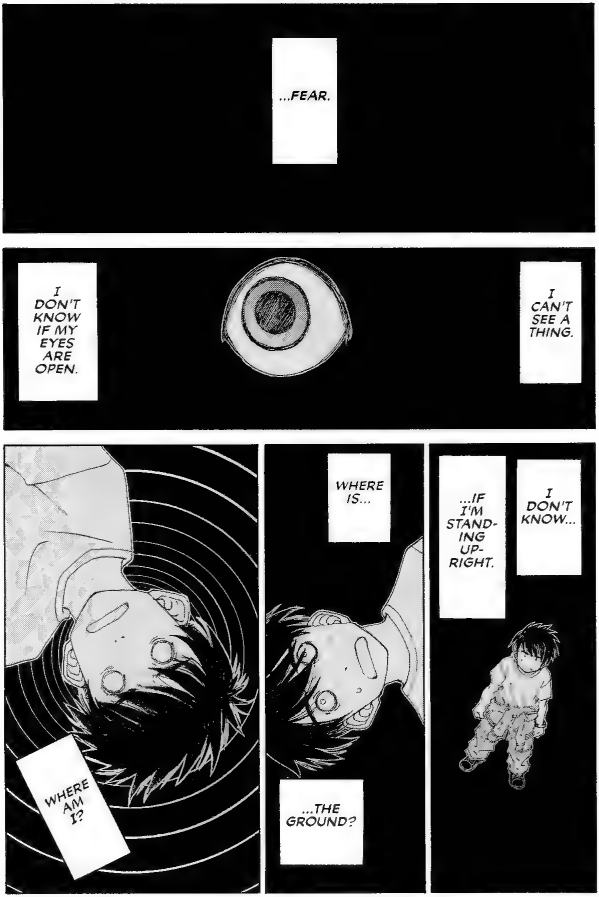
...BECAUSE SHE SEES BY HEARING ECHOES!!
...ARE MY EARS.
MY EYES...
YES, I *CAN* "SEE" YOU, AS CLEAR AS DAY.
OH, MY. YOU FIGURED *THAT* OUT QUICKLY.

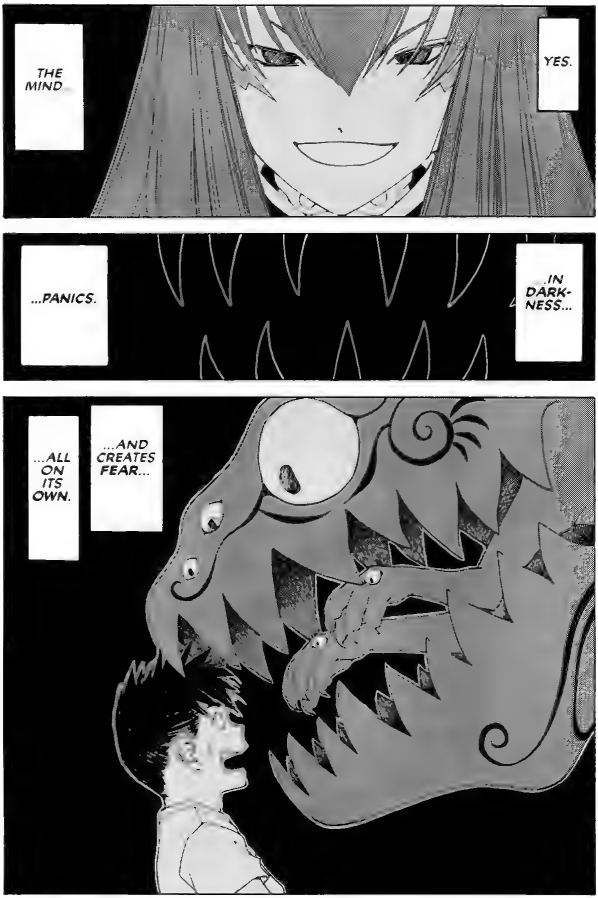
NOW LET ME SHOW YOU WHAT IT IS TO BE BLIND.

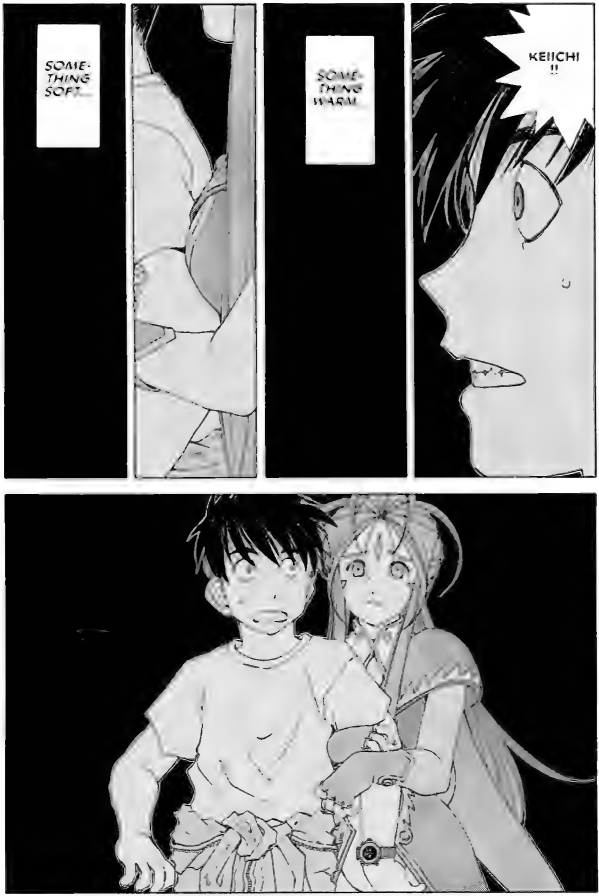
CHAPTER 253

Melting into Darkness


ABOVE AND BELOW...
...EVERY-WHERE IS DARK-NESS.
AND DARK-NESS IS...
FRONT AND BACK...
THE DARK...
DARK-NESS THAT IS...
...PITCH BLACK.


...FEAR.
I DON'T KNOW IF MY EYES ARE OPEN.
I CAN'T SEE A THING.
WHERE AM I?
WHERE IS...
...THE GROUND?
...IF I'M STAND-ING UP-RIGHT.
I DON'T KNOW...


THE MIND
YES.
...PANICS.
IN DARK-NESS...
...ALL ON ITS OWN.
...AND CREATES FEAR...

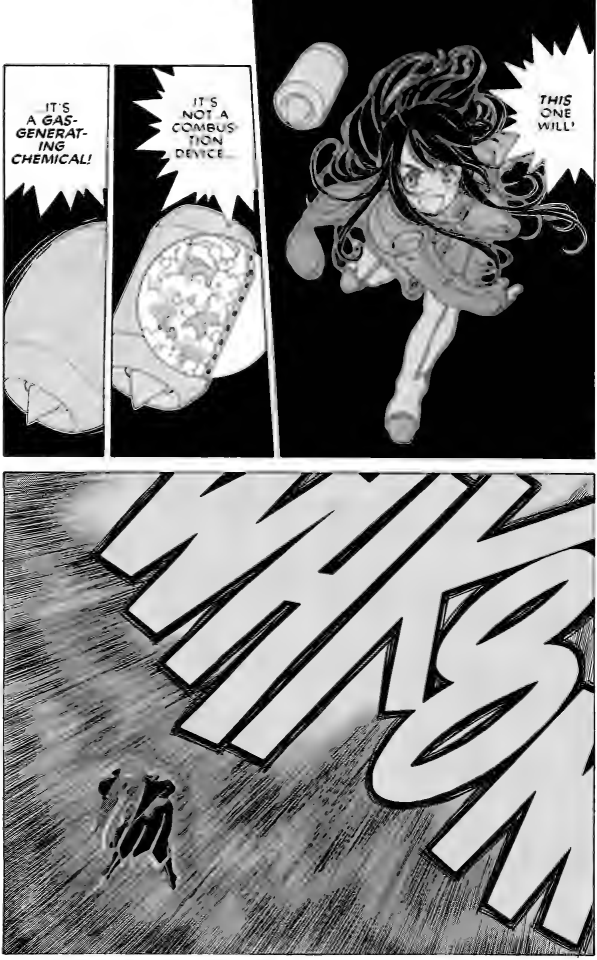

SOME-
THING
SOFT...
SOME-
THING
WARM...
KEIICHI
!!

AND EVEN IF I CAN'T SEE HER...
SHE'S RIGHT HERE.
BOY, IS SHE SOFT.
AND
SHE LOOKS WORRIED
I THINK..

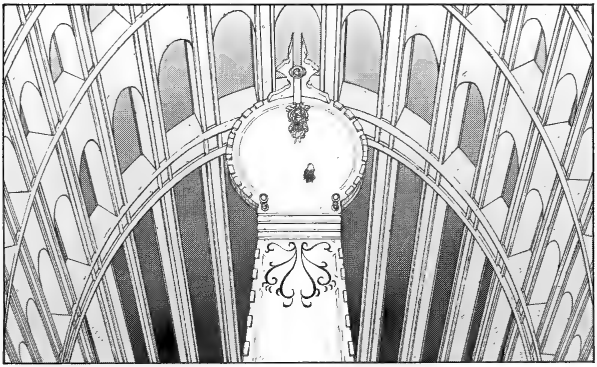
SORRY... I'M OKAY NOW.
I FEEL LIKE I CAN SEE YOUR FACE, BELLDANDY.
HMM...
...BUT YOU CAN'T SEE ME, CAN YOU?

NO, I CAN'T.
BUT I THOUGHT OF A WAY TO BEAT YOU.
IF YOU'RE USING SOUND TO SEE...
...THEN A SCREAM IS LIKE A *BRIGHT LIGHT IN YOUR FACE!!*
WAAH!!

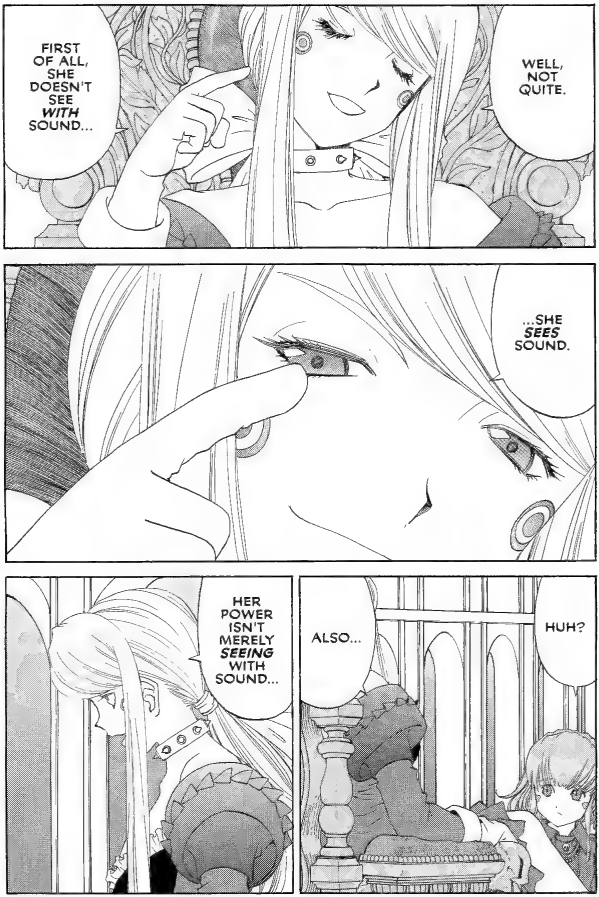
YOU...
THEN I'LL GET READY TO *MAKE SOME NOISE!!*
SKULD...
...AIR BOMB!!
SKULD!! A BOMB EMITS LIGHT WHEN IT IGNITES ...!!
IT *WON'T WORK!!*


...IT'S A GAS-GENERATING CHEMICAL!
IT'S NOT A COMBUSTION DEVICE...
THIS ONE WILL!
WHOOSH

MISTRESS HAGAL



IS THAT BAT GIRL...
...REALLY OF ANY *USE?*
SHE'S GOOD.
YEAH? BUT HER ONLY POWER IS THAT SHE CAN SEE WITH *SOUND!*


FIRST OF ALL, SHE DOESN'T SEE *WITH* SOUND...
WELL, NOT QUITE.
...SHE *SEES* SOUND.
HER POWER ISN'T MERELY *SEEING* WITH SOUND...
ALSO...
HUH?

AS SKULD HAS JUST DEMON-STRATED...
...SOUND CAN BE A TERRIBLE *WEAPON.*

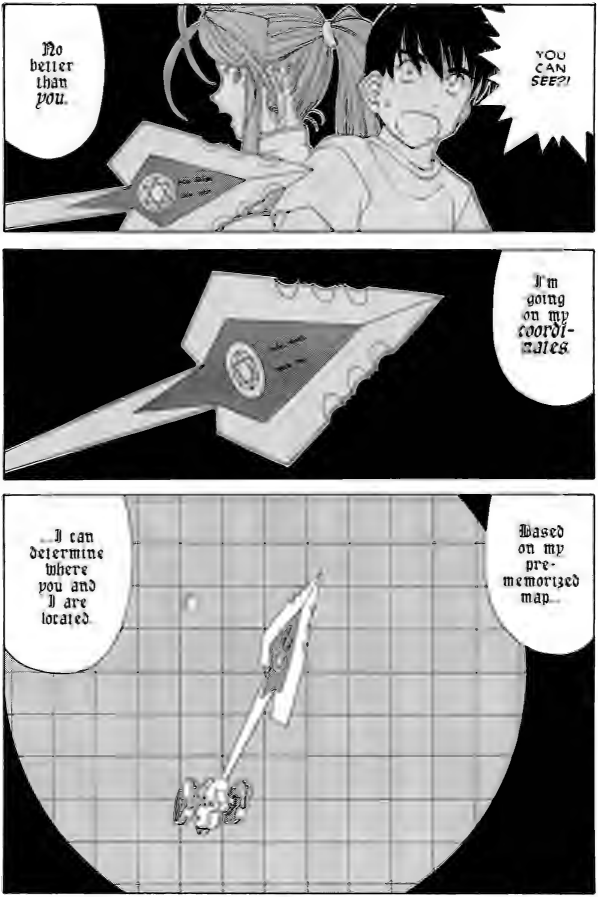
WHAT DID IT DO?
YES!! THAT DID IT!!
POP!
riiinngg
IT DID?
NO WAY!!
HUH?!
I'M AFRAID YOU MISUNDER-STOOD... WHEN I SAID THERE IS NO SEEING HERE.
TOO BAD...

THIS BLINDNESS IS ONLY TO LIGHT.
BUT THESE EYES SEE SOUND CLEAR AS DAY.
UM...
...BUT THEY'RE NOT WHERE MY POWER LIES.
IT WAS A NICE TRY, KID.
THE BOMB BURST BEHIND ME. I ADMIT MY EARS ARE RINGING A LITTLE...

...WAHH !!
MY WHOLE BODY'S SHAKING...
...WHAT'S THIS?

SKULD!!
WHUDD
HOW IS SHE ATTACK-ING?!
WHAT ?!
OKAY!!
KEIICHI, PLEASE STAY CLOSE TO ME!!

...and here.
WHP
Here...
THWMP
...I COULD FIGHT...
IF ONLY URD AND SKULD WERE SAFE BESIDE ME...
...Will that do...?


No better than you.
YOU CAN SEE?!
I'm going on my coordinates.
Based on my pre-memorized map...
...I can determine where you and I are located.

OH, NO. THIS IS *MORE* THAN ENOUGH.
You guys haven't moved much, so I knew where you were.
I can't trace a target if it keeps moving to evade.
That I can't do.
THEN YOU CAN FIND *HER!!*
NOW IT'S *OUR* TURN TO DO SOME*THING*
Twirl, Dance, Gather to My Side...
SOMETHING YOU CAN DETECT BY NEITHER LIGHT NOR SOUND...

WIND
...ROARING TEMPEST!!
...Spin, Twirl Around Our Axis...
...But Now Has Come the Time to Rage...
...At Times Showing a Gentle Face...

!?
...KEIICHI, PLEASE DON'T MOVE!
Better listen to her, friend.
Move now, and you'll be blown away.
EH?

—We're in the eye of the storm.

Because just right at this moment—

CHAPTER 254

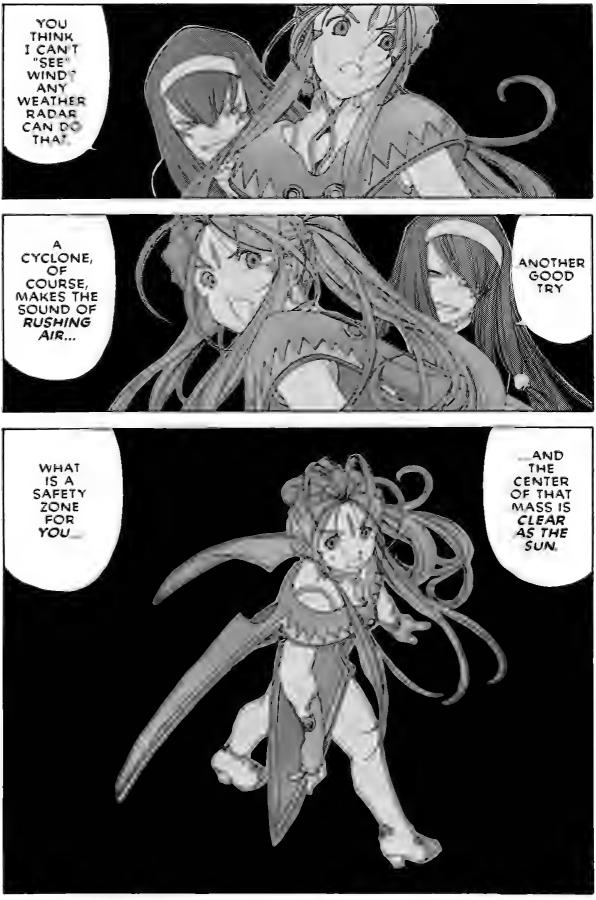
Darkness, Shaken

RR
AR
AR

ROARRRRR
Terrifying, isn't it...?
WSAH WSAH
WSAH

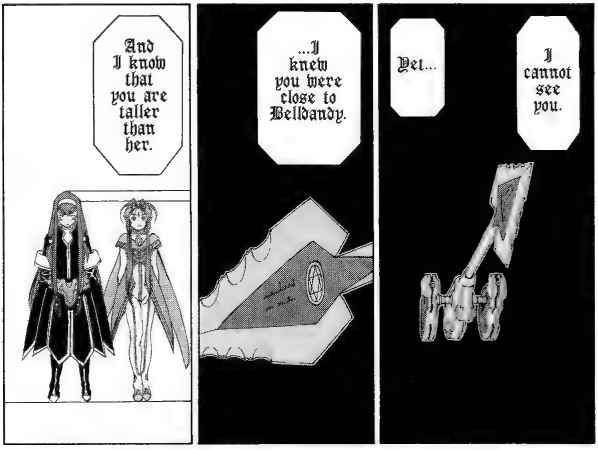
I doubt even I could have flown through that wind.
...SHE COULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED.
THEN ALVAR, TOO...
...I COULDN'T HAVE DONE THAT.
IF YOU HADN'T BROUGHT US URD AND SKULD...
IT LOOKED BAD THERE FOR A MOMENT, SO TO SPEAK.
YES, INDEED.

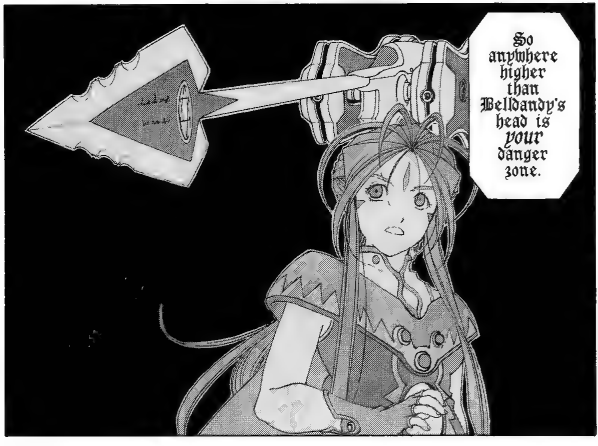
UNLESS SHE WAS IN THE CENTER
No No! possible in that storm.
SHE CAN'T BE
RIGHT IN THE CENTER
YES. INDEED.


YOU THINK I CAN'T "SEE" WIND? ANY WEATHER RADAR CAN DO THAT.
A CYCLONE, OF COURSE, MAKES THE SOUND OF *RUSHING AIR*...
ANOTHER GOOD TRY
WHAT IS A SAFETY ZONE FOR *YOU*...
...AND THE CENTER OF THAT MASS IS *CLEAR AS THE SUN.*

SHINGG
HOHHHH
...IS A SAFETY ZONE FOR ME.

YOU
SEE
ME?!
THMP

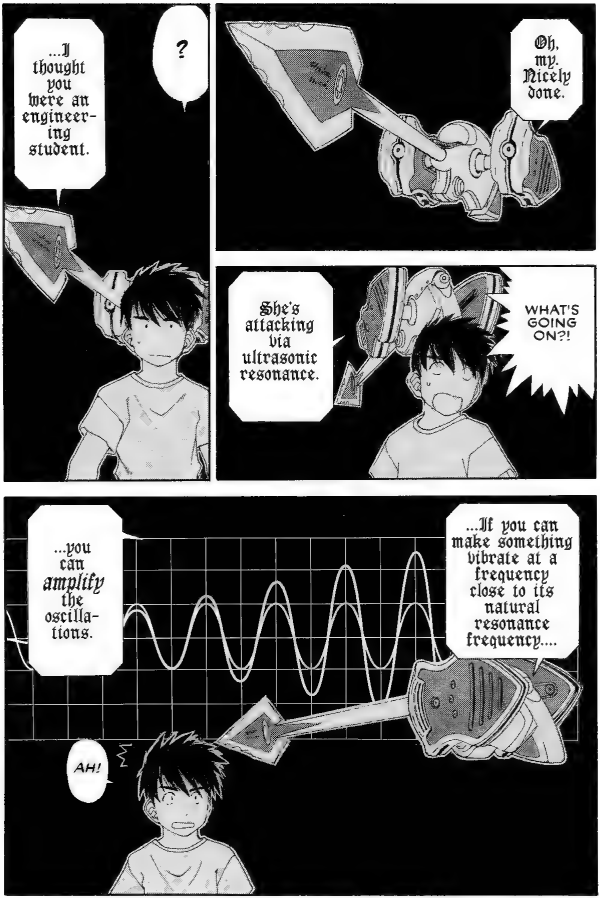

And I know that you are taller than her.
...I knew you were close to Belldandy.
Yet...
I cannot see you.


So anywhere higher than Belldandy's head is *your* danger zone.

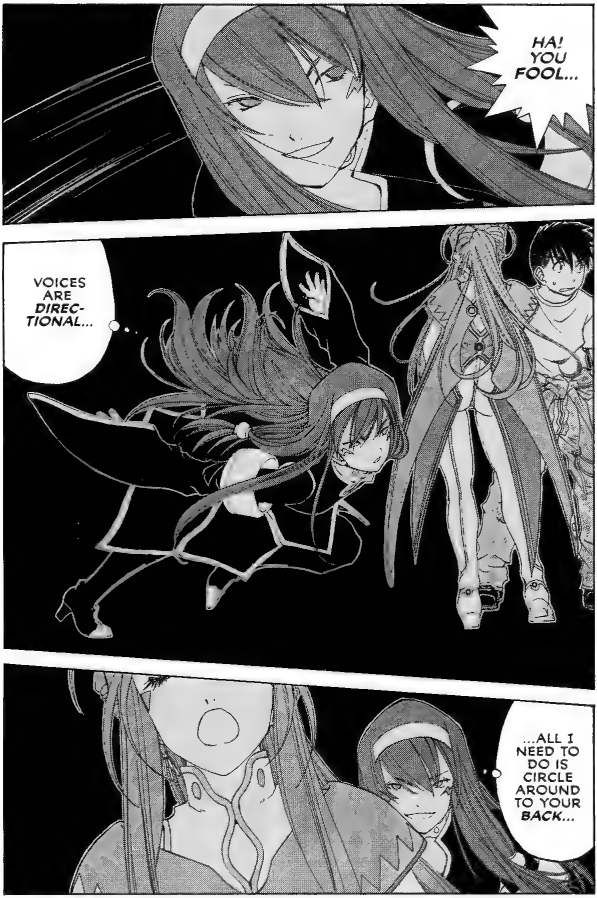
SO YOU'VE CAST ME OUT OF THE SAFE AREA
HMPH.
!!!
...
YMMM
KUHH
IN THAT CASE, I'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE SURE SHE RAISES NO MORE WINDS.

SHAKE FROM THE INSIDE UNTIL YOU SWOON
SYMPATHETIC VIBRATION!
I... I'm shaking!
VVVVVVV
IF IT'S ULTRASONIC RESONANCE

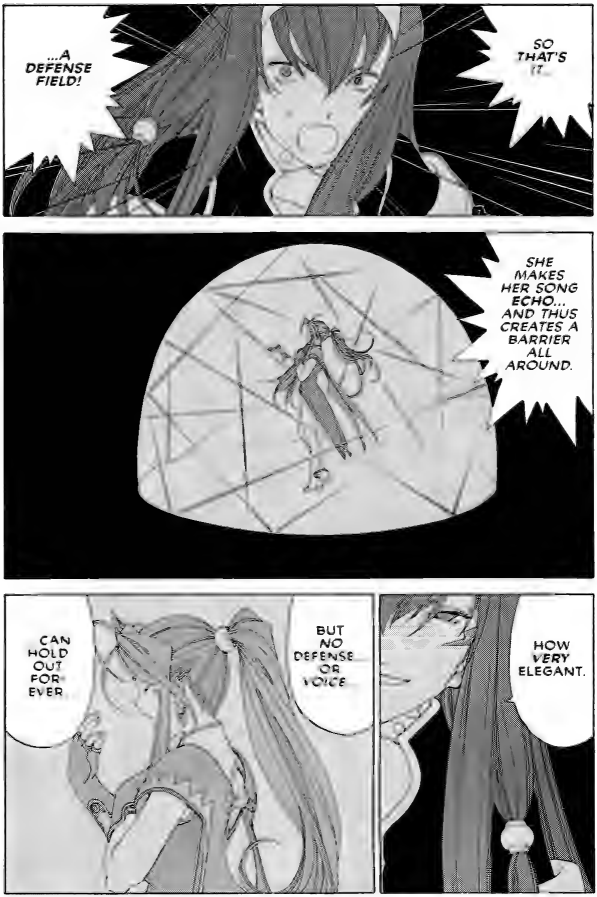
.. SOUND CAN DEFEND!
...WHAT ?!


...I thought you were an engineering student.
?
Oh, my. Nicely done.
She's attacking via ultrasonic resonance.
WHAT'S GOING ON?!
...you can amplify the oscillations.
...If you can make something vibrate at a frequency close to its natural resonance frequency....
AH!

GLASSES SHATTER! BRIDGES FALL!
Yes.
That's how she overcame the others. Striking from the inside.
No wonder they could not defend themselves.
BUT WHY HAS IT STOPPED?
...NOW I GET IT BELL-DANDY'S MODULATING HER VOICE...
...TO DISTORT THE ATTACK FREQUENCY.
Weren't you listening?
I said, you need a frequency close to the resonance frequency to make it work.

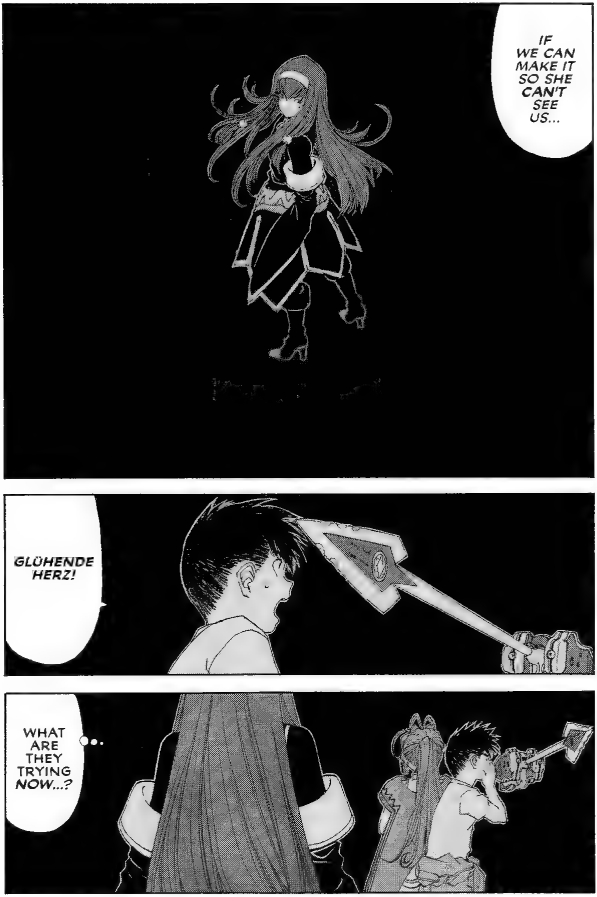

HA! YOU FOOL...
VOICES ARE DIREC-TIONAL...
...ALL I NEED TO DO IS CIRCLE AROUND TO YOUR BACK...

WHY
...?!


...A DEFENSE FIELD!
SO THAT'S IT...
SHE MAKES HER SONG ECHO... AND THUS CREATES A BARRIER ALL AROUND.
CAN HOLD OUT FOR-EVER...
BUT NO DEFENSE OR VOICE
HOW VERY ELEGANT.

...
...we need to go on the attack.
She can't keep this up...
...YOU ARE DEFEATED!
THE MOMENT HER VOICE FAILS...
A WAY TO ATTACK...

...SHE MUST HAVE DODGED IT.
WHEN GLÜHENDE HERZ ATTACKED BEFORE...
BUT IT BREEDS OVER-CONFI-DENCE.
AN OVER-WHELMING ADVAN-TAGE.
WE SEE NOTHING. SHE SEES US.
...GOOD ENOUGH TO NEUTRAL-IZE A CLOSE-IN ATTACK.
THEN HER REFLEXES ARE EXCELLENT...


IF WE CAN MAKE IT SO SHE CAN'T SEE US...
GLÜHENDE HERZ!
WHAT ARE THEY TRYING NOW...?

CAN YOU DO IT...?
It would be quite impossible for anyone else.
Of course I can do it.
...THE FIELD'S SO FULL OF SOUND... IT'S A BLUR.
I CAN'T MAKE IT OUT...
WHAT ARE THEY SAYING ...?

BUT JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU STILL CAN DO...?
AT LAST! SHE'S LOST HER VOICE...
GO!!

BAM!

Creator Kosuke Fujishima's message to fans in the original Japanese *Oh My Goddess!* Vol. 40:

I wish to offer my deepest thanks to all my readers who have stayed the course with me this long, long time, all forty volumes' worth.

No matter how much I may hunger to do Oh My Goddess!, *I could not move the tale along one chapter, or even one page, if you were not there to read it for me.*

In other words, the person who has really upheld and supported this long, long story is you, my reader.

And now, even now, we are still only partway along the journey. If you find yourself musing about what will finally become of Keiichi, Belldandy, and all the gang, then please keep picking up Afternoon *magazine or these* Oh My Goddess! *graphic novels.*

If you find a story inside that warms your heart, then nothing can make me, your artist and author, happier than that.

EDITOR
Carl Gustav Horn

DESIGNER
Kat Larson

PUBLISHER
Mike Richardson

English-language version
produced by Dark Horse Comics

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Well, here we are at *Oh My Goddess!* Volume 40 (just in case you somehow missed that info on the front cover, back, and spine ^_^). It's not difficult to think of manga that have reached this many volumes—*One Piece* and *Naruto* come to mind. But while they are among Japan's top-selling manga, the fact that those stories come out in weekly magazines in Japan shows they got to more than forty volumes in a much shorter time than *Oh My Goddess!*

It's a different kind of achievement for a manga that comes out in a monthly magazine, such as *Oh My Goddess!*, to reach forty volumes, because that means it had to hold on to people's attention for much longer. In the case of *Oh My Goddess!*, it was twenty-one years and one month; *OMG!* chapter 1 ran in the November 1988 issue of *Afternoon* magazine, whereas the last chapter in this volume, chapter 254, ran in the December 2009 issue of *Afternoon*.

In fact, I can't think of another manga that has had such a long run in a single Japanese monthly magazine as *Oh My Goddess!* has (some long-running manga bounce around different magazines to keep going, and even go to different publishers). As I noted back in vol. 1's Enchantress, Ronald Reagan was still president when *OMG!* began, and in America, Japan was still viewed the way China is today—as the country that rivaled and would perhaps surpass the United States economically and in global influence. It's a sad turnaround to see US politicians today talk about how we have to *avoid* stagnating economically like Japan, when twenty years ago they all thought Japan was going to eat our lunch (really—if you had a nice bento, would you want to eat an American's Lunchables?)

But through good times and bad, *Oh My Goddess!* has endured. Vol. 40 is a landmark, but it's certainly not the end of the series! Vol. 43 of *Oh My Goddess!* just came out in Japan this September, and Dark Horse will continue to release future volumes. By the way, perhaps you're wondering why there's such a difference in page count between different volumes of *OMG!* This is something you'll especially notice in the recent unflopped reissues of older volumes such as vols. 16 and 17, which are literally twice the size of vol. 40.

Well, in the immortal words of the Dirty Pair, it's not our fault. ^_^ The number of *Oh My Goddess!* manga chapters in each of the English volumes is based directly on how many there were in the original Japanese volumes.

I say the chapters are the same, because obviously such things as Letters to the Enchantress are unique to the English edition. Japanese fans do write letters to *OMG!* (as you know, we've been translating those old letters since vol. 34), but they appeared in *Afternoon* magazine, rather than in the Japanese graphic novels. Don't forget *your* letters have been appearing recently in our reissues of older volumes, the most recent of which was vol. 19. The last of those reissued volumes, of course, will be vol. 20 in February 2012, but at that point we will continue to feature your letters in vols. 41, 42, etc. Don't stop writing in! ^_^

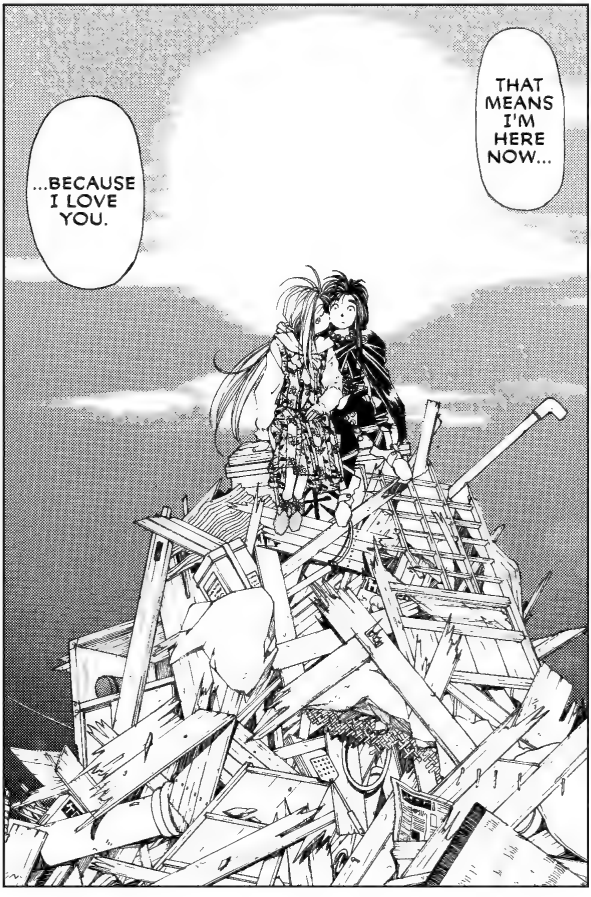
So the difference in page counts is fundamentally due to differences in the original Japanese volumes. But don't worry; this isn't a permanent downgrade, like those sneaky smaller packages you get in the supermarket these days—vol. 41 will be back up to seven chapters. Why vol. 40 is so short I don't quite know, but there may have been a desire to get it out for the 2009 end-of-year holidays in Japan.

We'll return once again to the feature we've run in recent newer volumes of *Oh My Goddess!*—Kosuke Fujishima's remarks to readers from the early days of the story. As ever, these are translated as they appeared in the Japanese volumes of *OMG!*, in this case the original version of vol. 40, of course. Previous volumes of the commentary had text alone, but starting with vol. 40, the commentary also began to feature panels from the manga to better illustrate the discussion, so we are featuring the corresponding English-language panels in our version as well.

The Japanese editor started off this volume's comments by offering double congratulations to Fujishima-sensei, pointing out that the end of 2009 marks not only the fortieth volume of *Oh My Goddess!*, but its twenty-first anniversary as well. But let's rewind back twenty years to December 1991. The month began with U2's *Achtung Baby* the number-one album in the United States; the month would end with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, marking the end of the Cold War that had dominated world politics in the second half of the twentieth century.

This peaceful resolution to a struggle many believed could only conclude in apocalypse was oddly mirrored by chapter 39, the end of the "Lord of Terror" story arc in *Oh My Goddess!* (which included a reference to the US-Soviet conflict, the only one ever to occur in the series). Having exorcised the Lord of Terror from Keiichi's body just before he could destroy the universe, Belldandy now sits with him atop a pile of rubble. The Yggdrasil System has gone down in the aftermath, meaning the old reasons for Bell being with Keiichi have been suspended. He's afraid she'll go home now, but she turns toward him and explains there are reasons for her to stay beyond their contract:

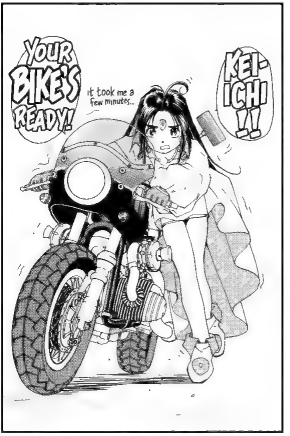
"Even guessing it would turn out this way, I'm still moved anew. Mr. Fujishima's art can make a grown man cry," said a reader signing as "Yutanbo," age twenty-two, from Hokkaido. Hosaka, a sixteen-year-old reader from Shizuoka, had a similar reaction, having been unable to wait until they traveled home to read the outcome: "The moment I saw the last page, my eyes filled

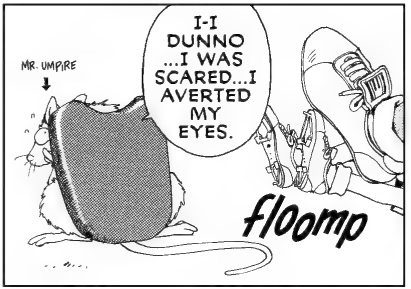

THAT MEANS I'M HERE NOW...
...BECAUSE I LOVE YOU.

with tears just standing there in the corner store. Ah! Love is so sweet . . ." Fujishima replied, "I always feel a little goofy and embarrassed when I draw scenes like this, but it seems a lot of people liked it. What a relief! Still, that mountain of rubbish was brutal on my assistant. I really should stop doing that to him (he says, for the umpteenth time . . .)."

In the January 1992 issue of Afternoon, *Fujishima advised readers to not just read* Afternoon *magazine, but to make it part of their regular exercise routine, pointing out that raising and lowering it thirty times will help build up one's arm muscles (as noted in vol. 39, a single issue of* Afternoon *can be a thousand pages long). He then made the somewhat cryptic remark, "My Harley arrived at last! It was a long time coming, but wow! It's just too cool! It's so cool that I'm afraid to park it on the street in case something happens to it. Instead, I've just been walking around, boasting about how it's the best bike in the world." The remark is "cryptic," of course, because just that last spring, in the May 1991 issue (see vol. 37, p. 151), Fujishima said, "On a recent windy day, I stepped outside to find my DR250 tipped over and lying on top of my Harley," which would seem to indicate he already had one. Was this a second Harley, or perhaps a replacement for the first, which might explain what he said about being afraid to park it on the street?*

Naturally, the January 1992 issue of Afternoon *featured reader response to the December 1991 issue, which happened to contain the Skuld vs. Megumi battle royale in* Oh My Goddess! *chapter 40, "Robot Battle" (This is one of the English-language editor's favorite stories—he loves stories about college campuses gone crazed, which is why one of his favorite manga of recent years is Masayuki Ishikawa's* Moyasimon. *Although, to paraphrase Fujishima-sensei, all the banners in that chapter were brutal on the letterer . . .). Reader Ken Ishikawa (which, for once, sounds like a real name), age sixteen, from Kanagawa Prefecture, wrote in to say, "Little Skuld is really cute. She seems so childish. Just how old is she anyway?" Fujishima said he estimated her age to be "1,000,013" (at this point in the original Japanese there is a note, "uso!" meaning "no way!" or "you're kidding!"), "but as far as the goddesses' ages go, I've made her pretty young." Is this just Fujishima's way of saying she's existed for a very long time in years, but her maturity in human terms is about that of a thirteen-year-old?*

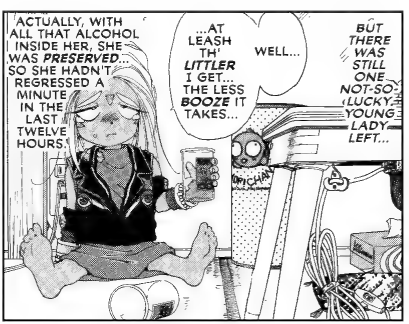




The December 1991 issue of Afternoon *also contained the* Adventures of Mini-Urd *story "Stormwrack: A Tale of Baseball," but it seemed reader sympathy lay not with the goddesses, but with Ratty, who had to deal with them as umpire. "That rat ref was too much!" wrote seventeen-year-old Yankee Hayato of Saitama Prefecture. "I'm looking forward to more." Fujishima claimed that Ratty was rumored to be an umpire for the major leagues, known for his "demon umpiring" and "super spinning umpiring." Fujishima's Japanese editor, known only as "Y.da," cut in at this point to say that while the names of these techniques sound awesome, "what about the content? I am deeply concerned."*

In the February 1992 issue of Afternoon, *before getting into reader remarks, Fujishima noted that he had recently bought* Flyover, *a collection of Shigeo Koike's illustrations of aircraft. "Quite aside from the beauty of the airplanes themselves, the exquisite contrast of sky, sea, and clouds in his work shines forth. Airplanes really are a joy. When I'm old and gray, I'd like to try doing illustrations like this as a hobby."*

The English-language editor notes that Shigeo Koike is one of those Japanese artists who developed an international fan base even before the manga era, ^_^ based on the paintings Fujishima referred to—they were done as box art for Hasegawa's line of model airplane kits, sold around the world since the 1970s. In fact, Koike has a better English-language site than most manga artists do, at ShigeoKoike.com. Fujishima came from a generation that liked to build model kits of planes, battleships, and so forth (as noted in vol. 38). There is an impression that the


ACTUALLY, WITH ALL THAT ALCOHOL INSIDE HER, SHE WAS PRESERVED... SO SHE HADN'T REGRESSED A MINUTE IN THE LAST TWELVE HOURS.
...AT LEASH TH' LITTLER I GET... THE LESS BOOZE IT TAKES...
WELL...
BUT THERE WAS STILL ONE NOT-SO-LUCKY YOUNG LADY LEFT...
CHAN

younger generation of fans in Japan don't really do this anymore, although Genshiken suggested that building Gunpla (Gundam plastic model kits) is still considered something you need to do at least a little to keep your otaku cred.

The two-part story that began with chapter 41 ("The Trials of Morisato") saw the continuing effects of the Yggdrasil System being down for repairs—in this case, the goddesses had to rely on their alternate energy systems instead of getting their power from Heaven, and their emblem programs (those things on their foreheads—just in case you forgot what they were ^_^), responsible for managing their essential functions, went out of sync.

The emblem-program malfunction didn't affect Belldandy, because of her status as the goddess of the present—but Skuld, being the goddess of the future, began to grow physically older in appearance, while Urd, goddess of the past, appeared to regress in age. She was seen at the end of the chapter ruefully clutching some of her alternate energy source (booze) while the narrator reflected that she was a "not-so-lucky" young lady. This was a play on hakko, which means both "unlucky" and "fermented." But reader Burua, a seventeen-year-old student from Yamanashi Prefecture, reflected that if Urd were to use her ability to subdivide herself into mini-Urds, she could also be hakko, meaning "eight girls." "Killer pun!" said Fujishima in response. "I wish I'd thought of that. Right. Next time I'll have Urd change into a bird, so she can also be a kakko [cuckoo] girl. Hmm. Maybe I should have quit while I was ahead."

Another reader response in the February 1992 issue of Afternoon, from an eighteen-year-old Yamaguchi Prefecture student going by the name of Suimugetsu: "'Stormwrack: A Tale of Baseball' might as well have been 'wrecked up' for Ratty," making a play on fu-un, meaning "stormy, ominous weather," and fu-un, meaning "bad luck, misfortune." "What's up with all these puns?!" shrieked Fujishima on the letters page. "Okay, if that's the way you want it, my next series will be a tale of fighting volleyball! [The mini-Urd strip excerpted above indeed involved a tail—ed.] Try and stop me!!! Looks like editor Y-da's stress can only worsen." Editor Y-da cut in again to say this was true, that the stress was taking a toll on his heart, and that he too should have quit while he was ahead (it is worth noting that "iya da" is an expression of alarm in Japanese, and usually quite a high-pitched one).

Fujishima then switched gears, as it were, to say, "Recently America's really been annoying me with all its harping about 'Buy American cars, buy American cars!' Really, who the heck do they think is going to buy an American car that's a copy of a Japanese car? Some of those pickup trucks and classics from the sixties and seventies would fly, though. I wish they'd think for a moment about why Harleys do so well over here." Of course, American motorcycles don't have the problem American automobiles do of needing to be built in a right-hand-drive version for Japanese roads, but Fujishima's argument was that if Japanese people were to buy American vehicles, they would want something with classic American looks, rather than the more Japanese-style cars the US was making in the early nineties to compete directly with Japan—he was possibly referring to vehicles like the Plymouth Laser and the Eagle Talon, both of which were made as joint ventures between Chrysler and Mitsubishi.

*The English-language editor recalls that trade friction with Japan used to be a big political issue in America; it's not so much that the situation got solved (we still have a big trade deficit with Japan, just as we did in 1992) but that it's not really seen as a problem in the US anymore, possibly because globalization and free trade have become stronger philosophies. In the 1980s, Japanese cars were so popular in the US (because they were perceived as cheaper, better built, and more fuel efficient) that American consumers couldn't even buy all they wanted; to keep good relations with the US government (which, naturally, wanted to protect the US auto industry), Japan agreed to "voluntarily" restrict the total number of cars they would sell in the US each year. Imagine if a few years back, the US comics industry had the clout in Congress to demand limits on manga. ^_^*

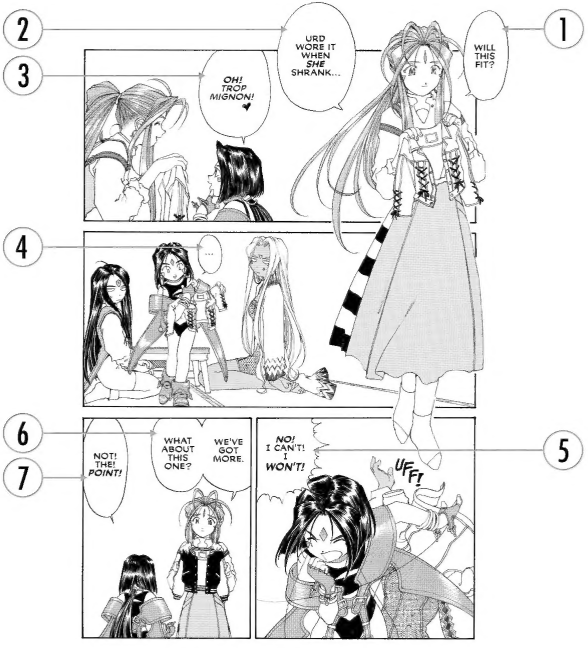
The US auto industry has gone through a lot of hard times, but today it can make vehicles on the cutting edge (such as the Chevrolet Volt), and to see how much things have changed, when Toyota was being accused of mechanical defects not long ago, it was American politicians (namely, the governors of four states with Toyota plants) who wrote to Congress in the Japanese automaker's defense, saying that the federal government's investigation of Toyota was a conflict of interest because of its financial stake in the US auto industry!

Well, we've just about run out of gas on this installment of Enchantress, but don't forget in two months we'll see you again with vol. 20, the last of the unflopped reissues of Oh My Goddess!, *and then two months after that, it's vol. 41, and onward from there—as far as Kosuke Fujishima wants to go! Just as the creator did on page 113, Dark Horse would like to thank all of the readers of this edition for taking us this far.* Oh My Goddess! *isn't the longest-running manga series in the English language just because we like it—it's because you like it, and have supported it since 1994, through its days as a comic book, flopped graphic novel, and unflopped* tankobon. *Thank you.*

—CGH

STOP! This is the back of the book!

This manga collection is translated into English, but arranged in right-to-left reading format to maintain the artwork's visual orientation as originally drawn and published in Japan. If you've never read comics this way before, take a look at the diagram below to give yourself an idea of how to go about it. Basically, you'll be starting in the upper right-hand corner, and will read each word balloon and panel moving right to left. It may take a little getting used to, but you should get the hang of it very quickly. Have fun! If this is the millionth manga you've read this way, never mind. ^_^



Oh My Goddess!

ああっ女神さまっ 40

OH MY GODDESS! REACHES ITS landmark fortieth volume! And as if to celebrate, Keiichi is finally leaving Earth with the goddesses on an exciting getaway . . . to Hell! To reach Hagal, usurper of Hild's infernal throne, Keiichi must help Belldandy, Urd, and Skuld defeat the door wardens that stand between them and their adversary. But when even the *first* guardian is the mistress of elemental darkness, you know things aren't going to be easy! Plus a special message to readers from creator Kosuke Fujishima, and more comments on the early days of the *Oh My Goddess* series!

Winner of the 2009 Kodansha Manga Award, *Oh My Goddess!* is the longest-running manga in English, and the inspiration for the recent anime TV series!

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